

A HISTORY OF THE  
PHILADELPHIA  
PRINT CLUB







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PHILADELPHIA  
PRINT CLUB

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To Ben. Collins  
with kind regards.

E. H. Suydam.

2 November 1929.

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*Latimer Street, West from Sixteenth*



A HISTORY OF THE  
PHILADELPHIA  
PRINT CLUB



PHILADELPHIA

1929

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The Philadelphia Print Club



# A HISTORY OF THE PHILADELPHIA PRINT CLUB



THE history of the Philadelphia Print Club is the story of the co-operative efforts of print lovers, artists, dealers and the public to establish in Philadelphia a medium for the dissemination, study, production and collection of works by print makers, American and foreign, with the final establishment in the heart of the city of a home for a definite and specialized aspect of art where information may be dispensed, and specific service rendered, whether the print lover be a specializing collector, a student making his first acquaintance with a printing press, or an arrived master.

Now the oldest organization of club nature devoted to the graphic arts in the United States, the Philadelphia Print Club began as little more than a pleasant thought in the minds of a few print enthusiasts who, glancing through the pages of an art magazine, chanced upon a print that struck their fancy, and decided forthwith to hold an exhibition.

This exhibition, a purely experimental gesture, was held in the spring of 1914 in the home of Mrs. Laurence Eyre, at

Nineteenth and Spruce streets. The prints, gathered by W. H. Nelson, then editor of *The International Studio*, created such interest among Philadelphia print lovers that another venture of similar nature was planned, and opened to the public in 1916 in the gallery of the Art Club.

Bertha E. Jaques, herself a contributor to the exhibition, and prime mover in the organization of the Chicago Society of Etchers, became so interested in the new Philadelphia print movement that she came to that city to investigate and stimulate possibilities.

Public interest, sales, and the particular enthusiasm of a few individuals presented material sufficient to warrant a club experiment.

To this venture Mrs. Jaques could bring her experience with the Chicago group, while Mrs. Robert von Moschzisker drew upon her own early environment in a print-lover's home and her efforts as an organizer of a Pittsburgh print group.

Standing on a prosaic fire escape within sight of the Art Club exhibition one hot, breathless day in April, Mrs. Laurence Eyre, Judge Jasper Y. Brinton, Judge and Mrs. Robert von Moschzisker found themselves organizers of the Philadelphia Print Club, and were soon joined by Mrs. Francis W. Lloyd, Mrs. William Linn and Mrs. Gideon Boericke as Board of Directors.

Artists also rallied to the cause of the graphic arts. George Plowman, himself an exhibitor, was the speaker when the movement was first launched at the home of Mrs. Eyre. John Sloan, Clifford Addams, Troy Kinney, Rockwell Kent, Timothy Cole, Joseph Pennell, Devitt Welsh, Albert Sterner, Ernest Haskell and, in later years, E. H. Suydam—these and many others gave of their



time and enthusiasm to foster the rapidly growing center of encouragement for the print maker.

In 1916 the Print Club was established in a small office at 219 South Seventeenth street, with room only for the desk of the executive secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Forbes Dallam, and her assistant, Miss Flora Lash. Wall space in such quarters was sufficient only for a make-shift gallery. The print movement in Philadelphia was still an uncertain experiment, sustained by the few.

During the early years the Art Club and the Art Alliance both opened their doors to the Print Club, offering gallery facilities and lecture space, but the diminutive center on Seventeenth street harbored more than one growing idea. There prints were sold as well as shown; members could find each other; the public might view prints; and artists and students could avail themselves of a tiny work room equipped with a printing press, given by Earl Hörter, under the auspices of a committee headed by Devitt Welsh.

The Print Club was fostering a three-fold opportunity—creative, social, and practical—by dispensing encouragement to artist and student, tea, receptions and other social gatherings to interested members, and providing the needed stimulus of sales.

The year 1918 proved to be one of difficulties. The war had paralyzed the arts, and had sent men and women into other occupations. Organizations not devoted to the practical needs of the moment curtailed their expenses and their activities. Members of the Print Club, engaged in war work, relinquished the tiny headquarters and contented themselves, as in the days following the Club's organization, with meeting at each other's homes, with lectures and similar activities.

It was during this chaotic period that Joseph Pennell, through

the interest of Devitt Welsh, came, with Mrs. Pennell, to give his first American talk on "Whistler" at the Art Alliance under the auspices of the Print Club. And it was during this period, also, that the Club, rallying to the spirit of the times, held a comprehensive and international exhibition of war prints, including lithographs and etchings from America, Czecho-Slovakia, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Russia and Italy. Among the American prints shown were those by Bellows, now a famous war series, Louis Orr, Herbert Pullinger, Albert Sterner, John Cotton, C. K. Gleason, William S. Davis and Rockwell Kent.

Mrs. Eyre, the Club's first president, guided the organization through its first difficult years, tiding it over the war period, and installing it at last as second-floor tenant in an erstwhile stable at 1614 Latimer street.

Elizabeth Forbes Dallam and Flora Lash, whose services held the organization together, were succeeded in 1919 by Miss Clara Chase. In spite of the disinterested support of loyal members, finances were often a source of anxiety, and more than once the expense of the venture darkened its prospect of success. Was it possible for the Club to enlist sufficient popular support to render it self-sustaining, or was it, rather, the altruistic gesture of so small a minority that its appeal, vital to the few, might not surmount the wall of public indifference?

The loyalty of the few did not falter. Individually and as a group they felt so deeply the lure of the graphic arts that their own enthusiasm, working through the organizing years, began to make itself felt in the outside world.

The quaint headquarters under the rafters and, temporarily, over a frame-maker's shop, attracted the public. At first came interested artists, many of whom were exhibitors; then no less





*The Print Club*





interested collectors. The work of the Club became known wherever print lovers gathered, whether within the city or in remote parts, and the example of its early struggle has marked the starting point of more than one other similar organization, whose supporters have come or written to the Philadelphia Club for information and encouragement.

Lectures and demonstrations of print-making, always popular, crowded available space beyond capacity, and on more than one occasion the stairs held an overflow meeting.

But whether in the cramped quarters on Seventeenth street, over the frame-maker's shop, or as at present in the commodious galleries of its own house, the Print Club always has had as its ideal the presentation of significant examples of the graphic arts, and the encouragement of the American print makers.

The contemporary flavor of the Club's activities mirrored in such a talk as Troy Kinney's "Decoration, Shall We Copy a Period, or Design a Scheme?" or in Ralph Pearson's recent dissertations upon the newer viewpoints and their design influence; such discussions as that prompted by Pennell's talk on "Whistler," or, at a later time, by John Sloan's talk on "George Bellows as I Knew Him"; talks by William N. Ivins, curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum; Ananda Coomaraswami of the Boston Museum; Frank Weitenkampf, chief of the Print Division of the New York Public Library; John Frederick Lewis, president of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Fitzroy Carrington, Royal Cortissoz, and many others, stamped the Print Club with a definite and memorable art personality, and marked excursions into the past with such exhibitions as great line engravings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries as well as adventures in present-day tendencies.

Under the guidance of Miss Chase the work of foreign artists was added to that of Americans, and the exhibition scope of the Club extended. Regular weekly teas supplanted occasional teas, and marked a first step in that direction by a Philadelphia art club. Membership increased, the Club became well entrenched in what was destined to be its ultimate club house, and a comprehensive national competitive exhibition of etchings was planned.

The Club, despite its gains as an art service organization, was still struggling under a financial cloud, and it has been the work of the last few years to establish an equation between activities and expenses. To do so without abridging the field of service was a nice problem, but one that not only was met, but conquered, with the result that activities have doubled in value and have advanced in scope.

The year 1923 found Mrs. Andrew Wright Crawford acting as president pro tem. Debt was wiped from the Print Club records, the Club was incorporated, and the once struggling art organization began a new life as a free agent in art service. The year was marked by a supplementary exhibition in the corridors of the Academy of Music; by a spirited auction of prints under the guidance of Stan Henckels, well-known Philadelphia art auctioneer; by a variety of talks, including those by Troy Kinney, John Taylor Arms, Frederick Reynolds, Royal Cortissoz and Harold S. Loeb; and by the creation of a new policy that would set aside yearly a certain sum for the purchase of a print by an American artist to become part of the Alice McFadden Eyre permanent collection of the Print Club in recognition of the invaluable services performed as founder.

In 1925 Mrs. Crawford succeeded Miss Chase with the title of Director.



The first national exhibition of American etchings, organized by Miss Chase, took place in 1924 and marked the inauguration of the first Print Club prize given by, now endowed, and bearing the name of Charles M. Lea. It was awarded in its first year to a Philadelphia etcher, Richard E. Bishop.

Larger exhibitions required greater space, and the Print Club displays first overflowed into the Director's office, and finally into the packing room.

It was indeed a far cry from pre-war days when, in order to hold an exhibition at all, its promoters tucked the prints under their own arms, and did the actual physical labor of packing, hauling, carrying and hanging whatever must be placed upon walls or, if and when sold, delivered to a purchaser's dwelling.

In 1926, Ellis Ames Ballard assumed the presidency. In that year, also, the Club held its first national American block print exhibition, competitive, as the annual etching display is competitive, and announced the award of the Mildred Boericke prize to Ilse Bischoff.

The Club had now completely outgrown its quarters. Not since its early days in the Seventeenth street office had it been sufficiently audacious to offer a print work-room equipped with a press.

Organizations, groups and individuals from almost every state in the Union and from many foreign countries were visiting the Print Club, and its influence in helping toward the formation of similar art service stations had spread beyond American borders even to such distant lands as Hawaii. But without increased physical facilities, without adequate space for a work-room, the growth of a library and additional gallery space both the service within and the extension service without the Club walls would soon come to a standstill.

Early 1927 found the Print Club giving serious consideration to a policy of expansion possible only through the purchase of the property at 1614 Latimer street. Keenly alive to the needs of the institution of which he was president, Mr. Ballard began an active campaign for the underwriting of the necessary sum, and toward the solving of legal difficulties involved.

In a surprisingly short time both artists and laymen had so rallied to the cause that a \$60,000 bond issue was assured, the club house purchased, and plans under way for its reconstruction.

In the autumn of 1927 the new home of the Print Club opened its doors to the public, a self-supporting organization able to meet all financial obligations, even to the interest on the mortgage bonds held by its own membership.

The entire building had been reconstructed in Colonial architectural style, with a large gallery, executive offices, and garden where the frame-maker's shop had been, and, above stairs more gallery space, including facilities for the growth of the Print Club library, and a balcony on which was installed an etching press, the gift of Richard E. Bishop, so administered by the Club that privilege of use is extended to any artist or student desiring to apply.

Increased gallery space made possible a more active program, with exhibitions of the work of an individual running concurrently with larger displays of national or cosmopolitan flavor.

In the summer of 1928 Mrs. Crawford, the director of the Print Club, visited various European centers in the ambitious adventure of gathering an international exhibition of etchings. The enthusiastic co-operation of foreign artists, organizations and dealers made possible the Print Club's first International, to which





*The Charming Little Gallery on the First Floor*



the entire club house was turned over in the fall of 1928. This display, equally successful in its artistry and in its sales, attracted national as well as international notice, and through the American Federation of Arts later began a tour of American art centers which included Brooklyn, Toledo, Ann Arbor, Mich., and Amherst College.

With its two national exhibitions well established as annual mileposts, the Print Club in 1929 added a third, devoted entirely to American lithographs, the Mary S. Collins prize being divided between Rockwell Kent and I. J. Sanger.

The story of the Print Club is thus one of steady growth, and with the background of a business administration, opportunity for increased educational value and co-operation between artist and public, is bounded only by the vision of those who may assume control.

In the new club house, with its light and ample galleries, its work-rooms, and its attractive garden, one may find the same loyalty to a cause, the same energy of purpose that actuated the little group of organizers.

Although the Print Club is now possessed of a home with all the comforts that accrue from such possession; although many of its early dreams have come well within the scope of realization, the future still lies ahead. This spirit of progressive service has exerted its controlling and formative balance upon Print Club development and Print Club prestige.

The building, with its innumerable activities, a center for the gathering of students from art and public schools; an information bureau concerning questions pertaining to the graphic arts; a home for collectors, for artists, for the public—the building, with its innumerable activities, is founded upon need, and has been



erected on the firm basis of service. Building a house around the spirit has thus preserved and increased the spirit, sending it forth beyond home walls far and wide over the United States and even to far countries.

## THE EXHIBITIONS

Print Club exhibitions, at first general in scope, with occasional displays of the work of an individual, grew more purposeful as they met popular response, and have now achieved a definite educational service basis.

It is not the object of the Club to impose its opinion upon artist or layman, but to gather from many sources work of all types pertinent to the development of the graphic arts.

In 1923 the Club took its first step toward the building up of a series of American competitive exhibitions destined to offer the public an up-to-the-minute survey of work accomplished during the current year in virtually all the print producing media.

Etching was chosen as the first medium to be presented. From its small beginning in 1924, the annual exhibition of American etchings has grown to such proportions that it covers virtually all the print-producing states of the Union and attracts American exhibitors resident in foreign countries.

The stimulus of prize-giving renders the venture definitely competitive, and brought to Richard E. Bishop the first award of the Charles M. Lea prize in 1924. Augmented by the granting of honorable mentions, it passed in succeeding years to Arthur W. Heintzelman, with mentions to Frederick G. Hall and Ernest D. Roth; to Armin Hansen, with a mention to Charles B. Keeler, and to Levon West, with mention to Roi Partridge. This prize, now endowed as a memorial to its donor, is given annually during

the Print Club's competitive exhibition, the prize winning print passing into the permanent print collections of the Pennsylvania Museum.

The encouragement offered by the enthusiasm of the artists and the public prompted the Club in 1927 to hold its first annual exhibition of American block prints, conferring the Mildred Boericke prize upon Ilse Bischoff, and numbering among its prize winners in following years Rockwell Kent and Thomas W. Nason, with honorable mentions to E. H. Suydam, Herbert Pullinger, Benjamin Miller and Howard Cook.

With two national print exhibitions established, the Club added a third, by far the most difficult to assemble, that of American lithography. This exhibition, held for the first time in 1929, divided the Mary S. Collins prize between Rockwell Kent and I. J. Sanger.

Catalogues of the national exhibitions are in demand by organizations and museums throughout the country and serve various causes, from their retention as reference material to the more active service rendered in the establishment elsewhere of print ventures.

The encouragement of American art, one of the prime objectives of the Print Club, does not preclude friendly art intercourse with the print workers of other lands, the first international exhibition having been established in the fall of 1928. Both the international and the nationals, subsequent to their Print Club showing, are sent on tour to various museums and art centers of the East and the Middle West, enlarging the geographic scope of the Club's exhibition service and gathering new contacts and new friends.

In 1926 the Print Club organized a comprehensive display

of the works of Joseph Pennell shortly after that artist's death and opened an impressive memorial exhibition during the month of October at the Pennsylvania Museum, Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park, with the full co-operation of that body.

This exhibition, planned and arranged by Devitt Welsh, chairman, and E. H. Suydam, associate chairman of the Executive Committee, was the first and largest of all the Pennell memorial exhibitions. It included etchings, lithographs, drawings, water-colors, books, manuscripts and letters loaned from the collections of Mr. John Braun and Devitt Welsh.

Nine galleries in Memorial Hall were set apart for the exhibition through the interest of Mr. Eli Kirk Price, thus insuring sufficient space for a truly representative showing.

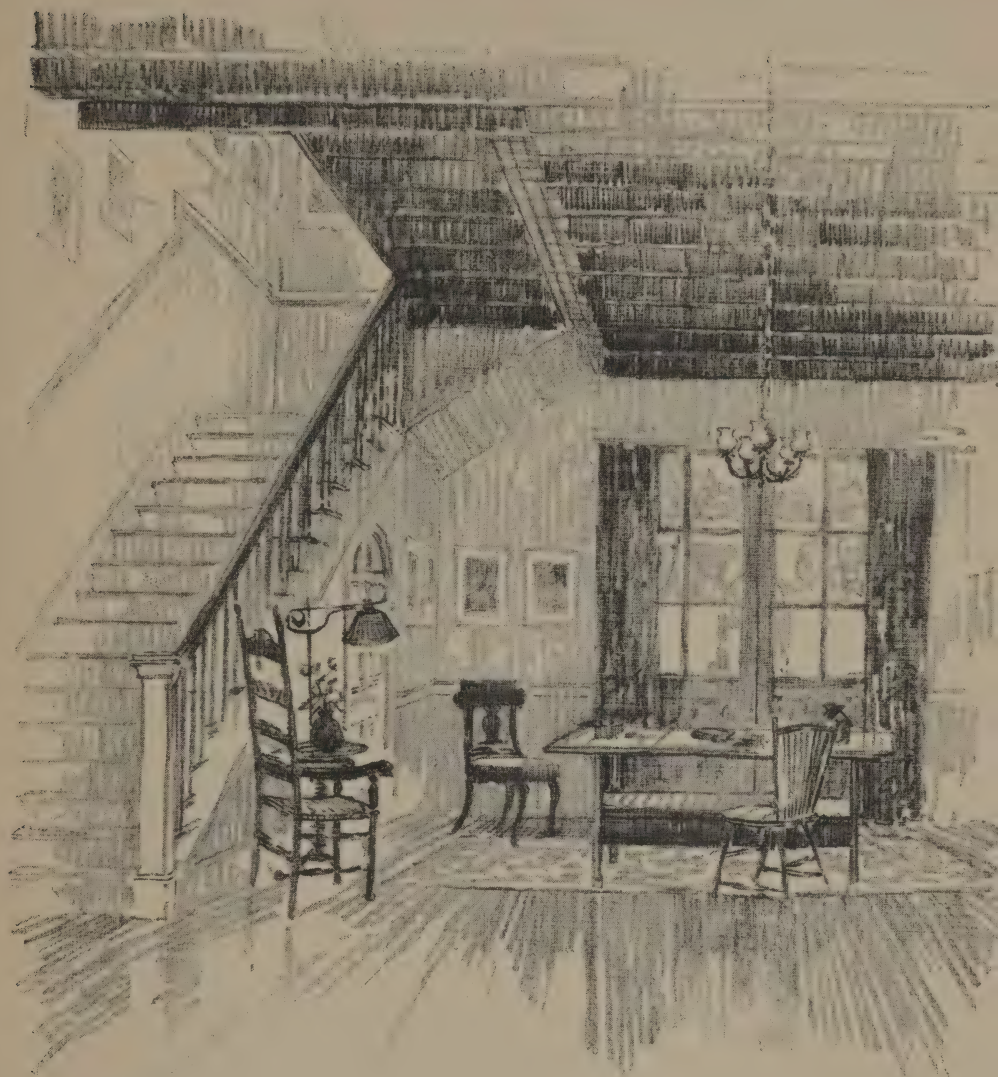
Through the generosity of Mr. J. B. Lippincott a catalogue in keeping with the dignity of the exhibition was published, Mr. John C. Van Dyke, a lifelong friend of Pennell, writing the Foreword. This book constitutes the first complete cataloguing of the Pennell etchings and lithographs, and was used as authority until the publication of the Authorized Catalogue in 1929.

The Goya Centenary of 1928 was marked at the Print Club by a fine display of that master's works, including first editions of his four satiric series.

Fine work by artists of the past and artists of the present finds the Print Club equally enthusiastic. It has held exhibitions of the work of Durer and of Meryon; it has shown French line engravings and Japanese prints; while the history of the contemporary movement has been traced by such notable one-man exhibitions as those devoted to the work of Whistler, Mary Cassatt and Toulouse-Lautrec.

In addition to its various catalogues the Club issued a





W. H. Sullivan

*A Broad Stairway Leads to the Upper Gallery and Balcony*



wood-engraving of Rodin by Timothy Cole, made possible through the generosity of Jules E. Mastbaum, whose interest impelled the French government to send to the United States the original Sargent portrait from which the engraving was executed.

Whether a print-maker be old or young, known or unknown, he finds a friend in the Print Club. If he be unknown, but an artist of promise, his work is watched and fostered with interest and with that more important formative service, display and sales. It is this spirit of friendliness and of service in its exhibition policy that renders the Club of practical value to the producing artist as well as to the public.

## COLLECTIONS AND CONTACTS

The encouragement and development of print collectors has been found a particularly helpful agent in bridging the gap between the creative spirit and the purchasing individual or group of individuals, while contacts with many groups, organizations, associations and individuals beyond the immediate range of the art world open new opportunities for the dispersal of prints and continually discover in unexpected walks of life, often associated purely with the commercial or the industrial, art needs that can be met through an art service station, and that, in the process of fulfilment, whether they be the production of a design for a candy-box top or the acquisition of the finest of contemporary prints, tend to give life to the American art market and through that market to the American artist.

The Print Club can, through its years of experience, place its finger on the pulse of the public art needs. It has found an ever-increasing group of interested purchasers who long to



discover an artist, and through personal discovery gain a sense of constructive collecting that never can be achieved through the acceptance of prints by artists of ready-made reputations.

This increasing urge on the part of individual American collectors has given the Print Club opportunity to build up and foster the success of artists not yet recognized by the commercial dealer.

To the rising artist who seeks advice the Print Club has much to say. Through its basic interest in the development of the graphic arts, and its invaluable contacts with the outside world, it is able to foster the creative spirit, and ultimately, when that spirit manifests itself coupled with an able technique, it can, through its many and varied contacts, bring the stimulus of sales. It is thus endeavoring to render the purchasing public a constructive force in the art development of the country, not by forcing the artists to meet public demands, but by developing public demands that will not be out of key with the creative aims of print makers.

The demand for prints on the part of the public has many aspects. There are those who want a complete set of one artist's work, a request that sends the procurer to the art markets of the world seeking not only such prints as are still current but those long since out of issue.

Others demand prints of special subjects. In its years of dual artist-public service, the Club has helped to build print collections that deal exclusively with prints of elephants, of cats, bridges, penguins, pigs, landscape; of those devoted exclusively to portraiture or to such highly specialized items as prints of Lincoln and of Roosevelt. Still others approach collecting with much the same instinct as the collector of fine old books and first

editions. These enthusiasts are tireless in their quest for fine impressions, and will sell any impression in their possession if they can obtain one of greater perfection. To fill such requirements necessitates close following of the world's art markets as well as of auction sales, thus broadening automatically the Print Club's own sphere of contacts and rendering it more and more a center with cosmopolitan interests and appeal.

Within recent years another type of collector has been developing, spurred on by the rapid growth of new art viewpoints, a type which champions either the conservative or the radical art trend, thus providing dual stimulus for two opposite points of view.

Another purchasing group of recent origin in this country the Print Club has discovered in the business and commercial world. The opening of a new office or a new building is often marked by the purchase of prints. Sometimes the character of the print is governed by the character of the business housed; sometimes it has historical emphasis; again it is governed solely by the need for decoration. Not long ago an inn housed in an old Colonial mansion sent in a requisition for colored flower prints to carry out the general color scheme of the interior.

The developing of collectors from among men and women who drift into the Club as the result of outside contacts has greatly enlarged art service possibilities, and the psychology of the individual collector provides a continual source of study and interest, tinged as it so often is with the underlying thought processes of business or profession. In one collector, whose business forces him to concentrate upon the more gloomy aspects of life, the Club found a ready purchaser for prints that reflect a like mental and emotional outlook. Another, who is

absorbed in real estate and building enterprises, visions communities brought together through the agency of the man-built span, a thought expressing itself in a print collection devoted entirely to impressions of bridges.

Collectors often establish contact with the Club through casual visits as delegates to conventions or as friends of other friends scattered through the country and now developing in Europe. Once the contact is made, the collector sends to the Club from varying distances a list of his needs.

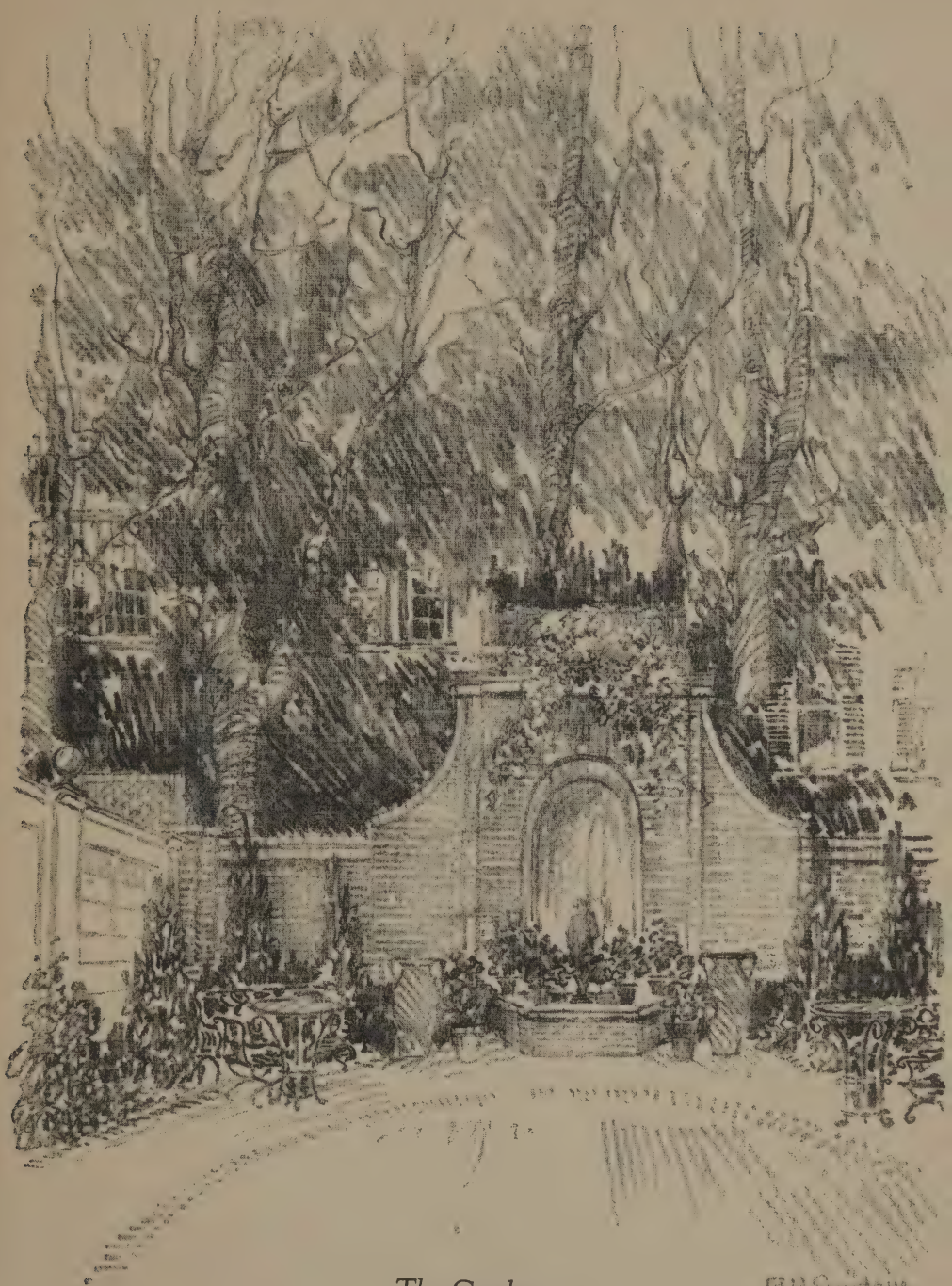
Contacts are further stimulated by the traveling exhibitions, which in a single year have numbered 21 and have touched such widely separated cities and towns as Toronto, Canada; Atlantic City, N. J.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Baltimore, Md.; Tulsa, Okla.; Easton, Pa.; Louisville, Ky.; Winston-Salem, N. C.; York, Pa.; Toledo, Ohio; Ann Arbor, Mich.; Ardmore, Pa. and Minneapolis, Minn. These exhibitions have been displayed variously in art galleries, memorial auditoriums, banks, bookshops, women's clubs, colleges and art associations.

As an art service medium the Print Club in one year sold 1,212 prints by 279 artists to 425 individuals. Records again show that 4,240 prints passed through the Club in a like period, while two etchers, one lithographer and two block print makers were given the encouragement that makes for success.

Through Club channels collectors are being brought in touch with each other, and reciprocation is made possible through loan displays of prints.

The work with the public schools brings the Club in contact with younger minds and often with incipient artists. Exhibitions have been sent to the schools for several years and students in supervised groups or as individuals have used the Club as a study center.





*The Garden*

R. H. Sunday



The gathering under one roof of so many needs, demands and aspirations, personified in such a varied assemblage of individuals and interests, strengthens the Print Club's opportunity for service, and tends to establish it as an art home to which artists come because they enjoy the atmosphere and because, in the Club garden, in its library, among its books, at its teas, lectures and social functions they meet kindred spirits whether in the person of other artists, or of art lovers, patrons and casual purchasers.

Without its peculiarly intimate and trust-provoking contacts with the two opposite points, the public and the artist between which it has established itself, the Print Club would be just one more art organization of well-meaning but not especially effective individuals. But as a focal point attracting collectors, purchasers, and interested groups at home and abroad; as a home where artists seek encouragement and advice as to paper, ink, printing and exhibition possibilities, the Club is shortening the distance between the man who longs to create and the man who, in some way, through personal enjoyment, desires to participate.

*Dorothy Graftly*





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